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Some Characteristics of Abraham Lincoln



AN ADDRESS

Made in the Assembly Room of the Union League of Philadelphia before
the Pennsylvania Commandery of the Military Order of the
Loyal Legion of the United States by the Chaplain

THE REV. HENRY C. MCCOOK, D. D., Sc. D.

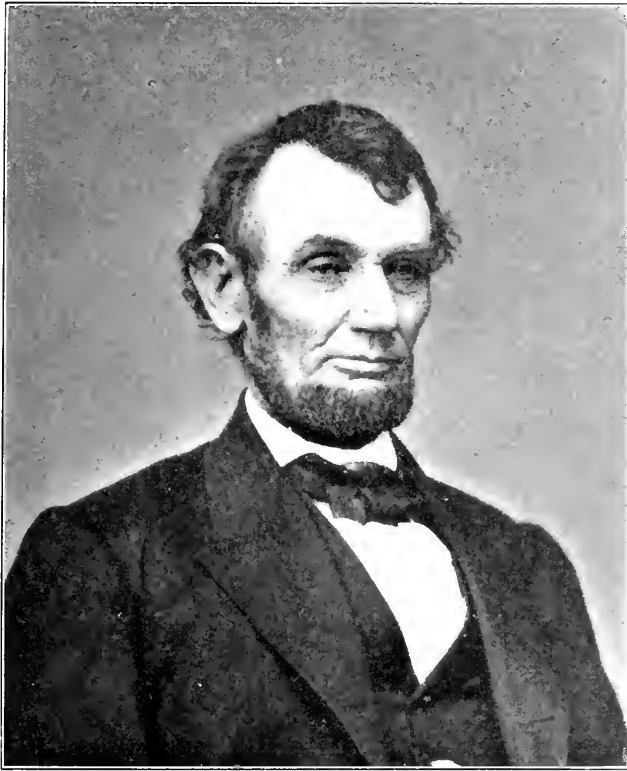
on the Anniversary of President Lincoln's Birth
February 12th, A. D. 1901

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“DEDICATION,” “CONSECRATION.”

“Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

“Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We are met to dedicate a portion of it as a final resting-place of those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

“But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it far above our power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work that they have thus so nobly carried on. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to the cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we highly resolve that the dead shall not have died in vain—that the nation shall, under God, have a new birth of freedom, and that the government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

GETTYSBURG, NOVEMBER 19, 1863.

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Some Characteristics of Abraham Lincoln



Henry C. McCook

An Address before the Pennsylvania Commandery of the Military
Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, by the Chaplain,
THE REV. HENRY C. MCCOOK, D. D., Sc. D.

HONORED COMMANDER AND COMPANIONS :

Never before this evening has your Chaplain ventured an address upon Abraham Lincoln. He ventures now because the duty was assigned to him by his superior officer. He has one purpose and hope : to voice, in some degree, the reverent feelings of his Companions and Comrades and their sons,

toward the one American President who without presumption may be placed on an equal pedestal with George Washington, whose birthday falls within this same month.

The first President and the sixteenth were at least alike in this : they were men of great stature, though Lincoln was six feet four inches high—an inch taller than Washington. They were alike, also, in that they held power in the most important eras of our history. Washington, as commander-in-chief, wrought the union of the Colonies into the fabric of a nation ; Lincoln preserved the torn and strained garment from being rent in twain. Washington, without challenge, is called the Father of his Country. When another generation shall have passed away Lincoln, with almost equal unanimity, will be known as his Country's Savior.

MR. LINCOLN'S PERSONAL APPEARANCE.

Lincoln's tall stature always commanded attention. Erect, spare, lithe, in his early days an athlete, his muscles were hardened by the toil that was his inheritance and lot from boyhood to full manhood. The work of the frontier, ploughing, planting, felling forest trees, building cabin homes, rail-splitting, flat-boating, gave pliancy and toughness to his limbs. He was a child of the forest and field ; like Washington, disciplined into vigorous manhood and self-poise by the open-air life and adventures of a new country. Like Washington, too, he was a land surveyor at one period of his life, an outdoor occupation which kept up the tonic influence of earlier years.

He has been called ungainly, even ugly. Not so. He was easy and graceful in his movements. His features were regular and not unpleasing. His deep-set grey eyes lit up with rare brightness, and when in animated conversation there was a play of intelligence, kindness and humor upon his face, and a sweetness in his smile, that made him seem, if not handsome, certainly most attractive. He had an expressive mouth, and the lips parted and closed in play of conversation and laughter in a rare and pleasant way.

It was a rugged face, it may be, on which the fret and wear of lifelong conflict with rude conditions of nature, and scant dower of domestic comforts, and poverty of social and educational advantage, had left deep-drawn lines. But it was a face cast in one of Nature's noblest moulds, and carved into the shapeliness and strength of a great and good man. One may admire the tree in yonder sheltered nook, screened from unkindly winds, nurtured by a fat soil, bathed in sun-

shine in every part, with freedom for growth and rich nurture for growing ; rounded, trim, straight in trunk and shapely in limbs, certainly it is beautiful. But there, on the exposed hillside, stands a sturdy oak. Its great trunk is inclosed in rough bark, creased and rugose, with the greening moss on its weathered side where it faces the northern gales. Its huge boughs are gnarled, are far out-spreading, with unequal shape, and yawning breaks where young limbs have been wrenched away by pressure of snow and wind. Toughened by struggle with a hundred winters and a thousand storms, it may not be beautiful to a critical esthetic eye ; but looking upon its massive and stately form, we who have found shelter beneath it from sun and tempest will declare that it is a goodly object to look upon. Such was Abraham Lincoln. His outer manhood, like his inner nature, was of the oaken type.

In repose his features were apt to fall into a sombre cast, and like all high-strung, sanguine temperaments, he had his moody spells. We can therefore quite understand that one of his favorite poems, which he knew by memory, and was fond of reciting, was William Knox's somewhat dolorous lament : "Oh, Why Should the Spirit of Mortal be Proud?" the last verse of which seems almost a forecast of his own demise :

" 'Tis the twink of an eye, 'tis the draught of a breath,
From the blossom of health to the paleness of death,
From the gilded saloon to the bier and the shroud ;—
Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud ?"

For the most part, however, his disposition was sunshiny and mirthful, and he bubbled over, as perennially as a mountain brook, with apposite anecdote, joke, witty story, taking incident and keen repartee. There is nothing unnatural or unusual in the seeming contrast, for Thomas Moore uttered a well-established psychical truth in his familiar lines :

"So closely our whims on our miseries tread,
That the laugh is awaked ere the tear can be dried ;
And scarce has the teardrop of pity been shed,
Ere the goose-plumage of folly can turn it aside."

His voice was rich, musical, not a deep bass, not a baritone, —rather a tenor voice ; fine, thin even, at times ; mellow, sympathetic, pathetic when the occasion required ; cutting through space when he rose to his full form and spoke earnestly ; pleasing, captivating, splendidly modulated ; withal a natural voice ; no whining, no droning ; no sing-song ; but manly, clear, ringing out with the tones of a natural orator and a genuine man.

His complexion was almost swart ; there were few blondes in the West in his day. The malaria, the exposure, the exigencies and experiences of a new country left, as they always do, the tint and tracings of the struggle with primitive nature upon his face. But that early seasoning was a part of his divine discipline. And it gave the vitality and physical vigor that enabled him to bear the unrelaxed strain of those awful years when he was President and our Commander-in-chief.

HIS ANECDOTAL VEIN.

Lincoln's love of anecdotes has made such a marked impression on the public mind that the trait has been exaggerated, or, at least, has caused distorted views of the man. We remember the terms "buffoon," "ape," etc., that were showered upon him during the war. In point of fact it would be as unjust to thus characterize the man as to characterize a mountain stream by the bubbles on its surface. One might truly say "a bubbling brook," or even "a babbling brook." But would that eliminate the qualities of clarity, sweetness, songfulness, usefulness, steadiness, persistency, that make the brook a blessing to living things along its mountain channel and in the plain beneath? Lincoln's story-telling faculty was the play of his kindly nature and humorous fancy upon the people and affairs around him. It cheered and amused others, while it gave relaxation to his own tense and burdened nerves.

But his anecdotes were not born simply of mirthfulness and kindness. The noteworthy thing about them was that they always illustrated something. They were not an end, but a means to an end. They were barbs and feathers that carried home an arrow of truth. He had the faculty that marks true prophets and poets. He could see, through the outer garb of nature and history, the inner truths that lie therein. His anecdotes were parables ; and few men possessed such a vast store, and had such keen insight of their inner meaning, and such complete and skillful mastery of memory's repertoire. His stories were so apt that men have thought he invented them for the occasion. If so, even yet more wonderful was the genius that created such fancies and used them with such practical force.

Surely his heart must have lain very close to the heart of nature ! To him the material worlds and the mysterious beings that pervade and, it may be, direct them, must have whispered their secrets, as ever they have done to prophets and poets, the truest human seers and interpreters of unseen things. We are told that at times he would fall into deep

prolonged silences that were almost trancelike. Were these the times when he saw visions and dreamed dreams, and heard the environing world of spiritual creatures tell him of the profound meanings that lie in created things and human actions?

EDUCATION—MASTERY OF ENGLISH.

The education of Lincoln was one of the most notable facts in his history. Beyond the merest rudiments he was self-taught. School-master, instructor or professor he had practically none but himself. He mastered surveying, and law, and political economy by his own inherent genius and patient industry. Whence came his eloquence? Whence came his pellucid and forceful language, seemingly drawn from the very fountain of English undefiled, and which puts to shame the speech and writings of the most cultivated? Whence came his profound knowledge of men and history, and the underlying principles of things?—of political morals, and the policies of nations? When we see how many young men, surrounded from childhood by the stimulus and formative influence of cultivated homes, and shaped by the best means and methods of school, college and university, fall into the ranks of undistinguished mediocrity, or fail to rise above the common level, we can understand better the greatness of Lincoln's achievements in self-education. Perhaps, after all, we had better speak of it as the product of genius, and genius is exempt from the rule and gauge, the weights and measures, the meets and bounds, by which ordinary mortals are tested and limited. Abraham Lincoln was a special creation. Providence framed him for a particular era. He was what the naturalists call a "unique species;" we must place him in an order of which he is the sole type.

LINCOLN'S MORAL CHARACTERISTICS.

In that subtle element which we call character, Lincoln is entitled to a high place. His appetites and passions were under perfect control. He was neither glutton nor drunkard. He had the primitive qualities of justice and truth in a high degree. From the crown of his bushy black hair to the sole of his feet he was a MAN, and loved manliness in his fellows. Selfishness and greed he despised. He had that rare power that Milton gives to the spear of Ithuriel, to detect with "touch of heavenly temper" the lurking meanness and selfishness in others. He was simple and sincere; absolutely without affectation, and free from eccentricities, unless his

story-telling may be so classed. He had a kind heart, and a gentle as well as a genial nature. "I have not willingly planted a thorn in any man's bosom," he said, and truly.

He was not a self-assertive man, though at times, when his long-enduring patience was unduly tried, he could and did assert the rights of his position. He believed in the people. He had unwavering confidence in the power of the people—"the plain people," to govern themselves. Was there ever a nobler utterance than this: "Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it"! And this was characteristic of the man. When Heaven gave him to see the truth, he held to that truth with inflexible tenacity. Duty was the star that guided his course through life. Principle was his motor in all the great utterances and actions of his noble career. "With charity toward all and malice toward none" he accomplished his destiny, and left behind him a record from which the angels will have little to blot.

THE EVOLUTION OF LINCOLN'S CHARACTER.

Such a character as Lincoln could not have been formed in a long settled and organized community. It was a product of the frontier. The seething, fermenting, changing crystalizing conditions of a new country wrought mightily upon the sensitive nature of the lad, the youth, the man, and moulded him into the character which men know. Certainly, God gave the primitive soul-stuff upon which nature and social environment wrought. Men do not carve marble statues out of slime. Nor does God so work. Lincoln was *born* with a great soul. His high and noble qualities were native, but his environment was a potent factor in their evolution.

It has been thought remarkable that the middle West should be the cradle of so many great men and women. It would have been strange had it been otherwise. The confluent tides of migration streaming from New England, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, from the Border and the Southern States, met and intermingled on the hills and plains of Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. The best blood of this nation, fresh, young, vigorous, wholesome, and for the most part clean, strong and worthy descent, beat in the veins of those pioneers. Their children were the inheritors of physical, mental and moral qualities that gave promise of success, and the nursing motherhood of their envioning life, with its stir and strain and stimulus and call for every force of mind and muscle, insured that manhood and womanhood which have con-

tributed to our national history some of the noblest sons and daughters of the Republic, may we not say, of the race?

At least one contributory streamlet of Lincoln's descent had its origin in Pennsylvania. Our Keystone State is the water-shed of the Atlantic Basin. Here rise the fountains of the Delaware, the majestic river which feeds the commerce and fosters the agriculture and manufactures of three great States. Here, too, among our Eastern mountains the Susquehanna springs, and, emptying into the Chesapeake, flows by the plantations and homes of Maryland and the "old Virginia shore," whence so many fathers of the Republic came. Even the Potomac, that sweeps majestically by Mount Vernon's sacred shrine, has many of its most important fountains and feeding streams in our Southern valleys and hills. In Western Pennsylvania are the sources of the Ohio, "La Belle Riviere"—the Beautiful River—that washes the borders of every State in which Lincoln had a home. It is not simply an analogy which you are tracing, but a natural and necessary consequence, that the movements of human migratory streams, following the line of least resistance, should have taken the course of these rivers southward, eastward and westward.

From Pennsylvania have gone many of the elements which have helped to build up the Commonwealths through whose soil and into whose waters our creeks and rivers run. Some of the branches of the Lincoln ancestry still dwell among us in Pennsylvania. But his direct forbears drifted downward into Virginia along one of those beautiful valleys that open southward, and there his paternal grandfather, as well as his father, Thomas Lincoln, and his mother, Nancy Hanks, were born. Still westward set the migratory tide, and very strongly in the early part of the nineteenth century, and brought Thomas Lincoln and his wife to Hardin County, Kentucky, where, on the 12th of February, A.D. 1809, Abraham Lincoln was born. It is the birth year of Gladstone and Charles Darwin, epoch-making men. In the same year and in the same section, and not forty miles distant, was born Jefferson Davis, the arch-conspirator and President of the Confederate States, around whom, as the official head of the Confederacy, the forces of rebellion were gathered. How vastly different the character and destiny of the two lads, cradled in the same vicinage!

It is noteworthy that the man designed to give the death-blow to American negro slavery was born in the slave-holding State of Kentucky, and that his parents and some of

his grandparents were natives of the slaveholding State of Virginia, on whose soil so many of the great battles of the slaveholders' war were fought, and which was the scene of the last conflict and the final surrender. He was not a product of "abolitionism" nor a child of a Free State. The bane and the antidote (as so often in nature) grew side by side.

Lincoln was a child of the log cabin. He was not born of one of the fine old aristocratic families as was Washington, although somewhere in his family tree one might find "good blue blood," if that should seem a matter of consequence. He sprung from that element of the white population in the Commonwealth which always has felt most severely the burden of slavery, and which, in the border States at least, clung with touching fidelity to the Union, and threw its great influence on the side of the Federal Government during the Rebellion.

LINCOLN'S LEGAL AND POLITICAL CAREER.

Lincoln entered early upon his political career, and at twenty-five was a member of the Illinois Legislature, holding the position through successive elections for six years, when he declined further service. But his whole life had thereby received its permanent bent. While pushing his first election canvass his talents for speaking led his political colleague, John T. Stuart, a lawyer in large practice, to urge him to quit surveying and study law. Lincoln eagerly agreed, took home the law books which Stuart lent him, and, with his characteristic diligence, energy and genius, had sufficiently mastered the principles of law to be admitted to the bar in two years. Six months afterward (April 15, 1837) he left New Salem and removed to Springfield, the county seat of Sangamon County. Shortly thereafter the town became the capital of the State of Illinois, and Lincoln, in partnership with his friend Stuart, entered upon that career which ended in the Presidency.

His success as a lawyer drew to him many important cases. My first professional service was wrought in the county seat of De Witt County, Illinois, from which I entered the volunteer service of the United States. That district was then within the circuit of Lincoln, Douglas, David Davis, Welden, Leonard Swett and all the leading lawyers of Central Illinois, many of whom I have preached to when a callow and half-fledged parson. The place was redolent with anecdotes of these men; and many of the townspeople who had come in closest contact with Lincoln were well aware of those noble qualities and personal peculi-

arities which have since become historic. I recall especially the pride and satisfaction with which my parishioners told of Mr. Lincoln's visit to the church when it was opened, and how generously he aided them in their struggles to pay for their house of worship.

The repeal of the Missouri Compromise awakened and spread throughout the North that anti-slavery agitation which led to the organization and triumph of the Republican party. Lincoln was aroused from his legal practice to the public discussion of the questions agitating the nation. The enthusiasm and skill of his leadership of what was then the opposition in Illinois led to the triumph of his party, and Lincoln barely escaped election to the United States Senate by the refusal to vote for him of four sturdy Democratic members of the opposition who were not quite prepared to bolt his crash Whiggery.

Then followed days whose very recollection stirs the blood like a trumpet charge. The Whigs and Anti-Slavery Democrats coalesced, and framed the Republican party in 1856. Two years later Stephen A. Douglas, the author of the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, which act had precipitated the anti-slavery agitation upon the nation, was re-nominated for Senator by his party in Illinois. Lincoln, as his opponent, canvassed the State against him. Douglas accepted Lincoln's challenge to a public debate. The two champions met at several different points, and each separately canvassed the entire State. It was a battle of the giants. The great questions under discussion were the right or wrong of human slavery; the aggressions of the slaveholding power; the arrest of the spread of slavery; the consecration and confirmation of every rood of our territorial possessions to Freedom, and in the end the environment of the slave States with a cordon of free people that should ultimately, by very force of example and necessity of social and political condition, compel the gradual emancipation of the slaves.

The discussion was typical. It prefigured and forecast the future. The whole nation followed it with eager interest. Douglas was a well-known character; a man of national reputation; a strong man; the "little giant," as his friends fondly called him. Lincoln was unknown beyond the limits of Illinois. But when the contest closed a new star had risen upon the horizon of national affairs, and seeing minds knew it was a star of the first magnitude.

Lincoln's moderate views of Constitutional authority and of public policy were approved by the cautious and conservative. But Lincoln saw and asserted plainly that beneath

all technical and documental points lay "the higher law" which declares that all men are created equal, and endowed by their Creator with the inalienable right to liberty.

He opened the campaign against Douglas by uttering in the Republican nominating convention (January 16th, 1858) these prophetic words: "A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe that this Government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved. I do not expect the house to fall. But I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction, or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new—North as well as South."

Bold words! How bold only those will understand who can recall the condition of affairs in the antebellum era, and remember the constriction which the contracting folds of the slave power had wrought in political, social, commercial and even religious circles. The popular vote was cast for Lincoln, but the representative districts were so apportioned that Douglas secured the legislative majority and was re-elected. Yet the hero and real victor was Abraham Lincoln. The campaign made him President. The Republican Convention of 1860 nominated Lincoln and Hamlin as their candidates, and flinging forth their banner inscribed, "No Extension of Slavery," moved on to the triumph which seated Lincoln in the White House, occasioned the War of Secession and the Emancipation of the slaves.

Has this great, perhaps the greatest, work of Lincoln's been a failure? Certainly the national interest in the full emancipation of the enslaved blacks, which led up to the war for the Union, has shown a marked retrogression. The sense of responsibility for the future of the freedmen has rested too lightly upon the consciences of the men and the party that secured their freedom. Thus it has followed that, by slow yet irresistible stages, the political rights or privileges of the colored men of the old Secession States have been abridged and nullified. What will be the result? Shall the time of reaction come? How shall it come? By peaceable agitation and evolution? By revolution of conflict and bloodshed? These are questions that the thinking and conscientious lover of his country must ask, and, if he ventures an answer, speaks with mingled fear and hope.

What would Abraham Lincoln say were he to-day to come among us? Would his great heart be grieved at the results of his emancipation policy? Surely we would have something to show him that would cheer his heart and strengthen him in the belief that he did the right thing, the good thing, the best thing for both whites and blacks. That was a touching incident which not long ago occurred in the House of Representatives of Congress. A lawyer, a man of education and ability, an elder and officer in a Christian church, the only colored member of the House of Representatives, and the last type of a period that is ended, stood up to pronounce what he called the "valedictory of his race" in Congress. It was a pathetic incident, and surely must have awakened sad reflections in many hearts, and sad forebodings, too. Yet the incident has its hopeful and its cheering phase.

"The negro of forty years ago," said the Hon. Mr. White, of North Carolina, "has passed away forever. Illiteracy among the members of the colored race has decreased forty-five per cent. Of that race there are to-day in this country 2000 negro lawyers and 2000 physicians. It holds \$12,000,000 of school property and \$40,000,000 of church property. Negroes own 140,000 homes and farms, valued at \$75,000,000, and they have personal property to the amount of \$170,000,000 more. All this," said Mr. White, "they have accomplished in the face of almost insurmountable obstacles—lynchings, burnings, false accusations, slanders, social, civil and economic obstructions and oppositions innumerable, and with the door of every trade closed against them." Surely could Mr. Lincoln, who knew the illiterate, ill-housed, ill-fed, semi-barbarous negro of the Southern slave plantations, have listened to such a statement as this, he would have lifted up to heaven the hand that signed the Emancipation Proclamation, and have said, "God, I thank thee!" and heaven might echo, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

And what would Lincoln have said to the conclusion of Congressman White's oration? "I am delivering," said he, "the valedictory of the colored man in Congress. But it is not a final farewell. The negro shall come again." He stood there (he declared) for a people bruised, broken-hearted, outraged, bereft of common and natural rights, but a people faithful and industrious still. He asked for them no special favors, but only a fair field to win the common blessings of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

The future is not wholly dark. It may be that the freedman of the South, dispossessed for the time of political privileges, and alienated from political agitations and ambitions, shall be thrown back upon those fields of usefulness and self-development wherein, by industry and good behavior, he will reap a harvest that shall demand and secure for him a willing return of former privileges, a hearty welcome to all franchises and endowments of American citizenship. When wealth, intellectual power, education and culture, social organization, and moral and religious development, have come to the negro with the coming years of the twentieth century, the few surviving soldiers and companions of the Grand Army of the Republic will have no regrets to spend over the part which heaven gave them to take in securing, by their good right hands, the freedom bestowed by Abraham Lincoln's military proclamation of emancipation.

THE DIFFICULTIES OF LINCOLN'S WORK.

The difficulties that Lincoln had to contend with, and the tremendous inertia of the loyal States, and the active and organized opposition to his emancipation plans, will better be understood by remembering (what is so often forgotten by many and unknown by more) that the Constitutional embodiment of emancipation was bitterly opposed. Lincoln tried to carry it through Congress during the winter of 1863-64, but failed to get the required two-thirds vote of the House. It was not until January 31st, 1865, that Congress passed the joint resolution proposing to the States the thirteenth amendment to the Constitution, which prohibited slavery and involuntary servitude. President Lincoln had been dead eight months before the official proclamation could be made (December 18th, 1865) declaring the ratification by three-fourths of the States of the amendment which gave legal expression to the act of emancipation! Slavery died slowly, and the great Emancipator died without the sight of its Constitutional entombment.

Speaking of the difficulties, almost incredible to this generation, that the great President had to meet in his double task of saving the Union and destroying chattel slavery, let us recall the conflict over Lincoln's second election. A prominent and widely-honored general of the war was his antagonist, nominated upon a platform which declared the war against secession a failure, and demanded the cessation of hostilities. At the ensuing election, November 8th, 1864, although the electoral vote was 212 to 21, there were in the

loyal States 1,808,725 votes cast for McClellan as against 2,216,076 votes for Lincoln, a majority of only 407,351 ! If the voters of the seceded States be considered, there was at that time, within a year of the successful close of the war, *a vast popular majority favorable to the cessation of hostilities and the consequent dissolution of the Union.* It took wise and cautious piloting to bring the ship of state safely through such shallows and breakers. The greatness of the pilot must be estimated by the perils which he overcame.

LINCOLN'S DEATH—HIS PLACE IN HISTORY.

April 9, 1865, Lee surrendered his gallant army to Grant at Appamattox. Five days thereafter, while every loyal heart was still throbbing with the intoxication of victory, and glad in the hope of returned peace and prosperity, the great heart of our leader and President had ceased to beat. The glorious morning that had dawned upon the Republic was turned into the shadow of death. The nation was appalled.

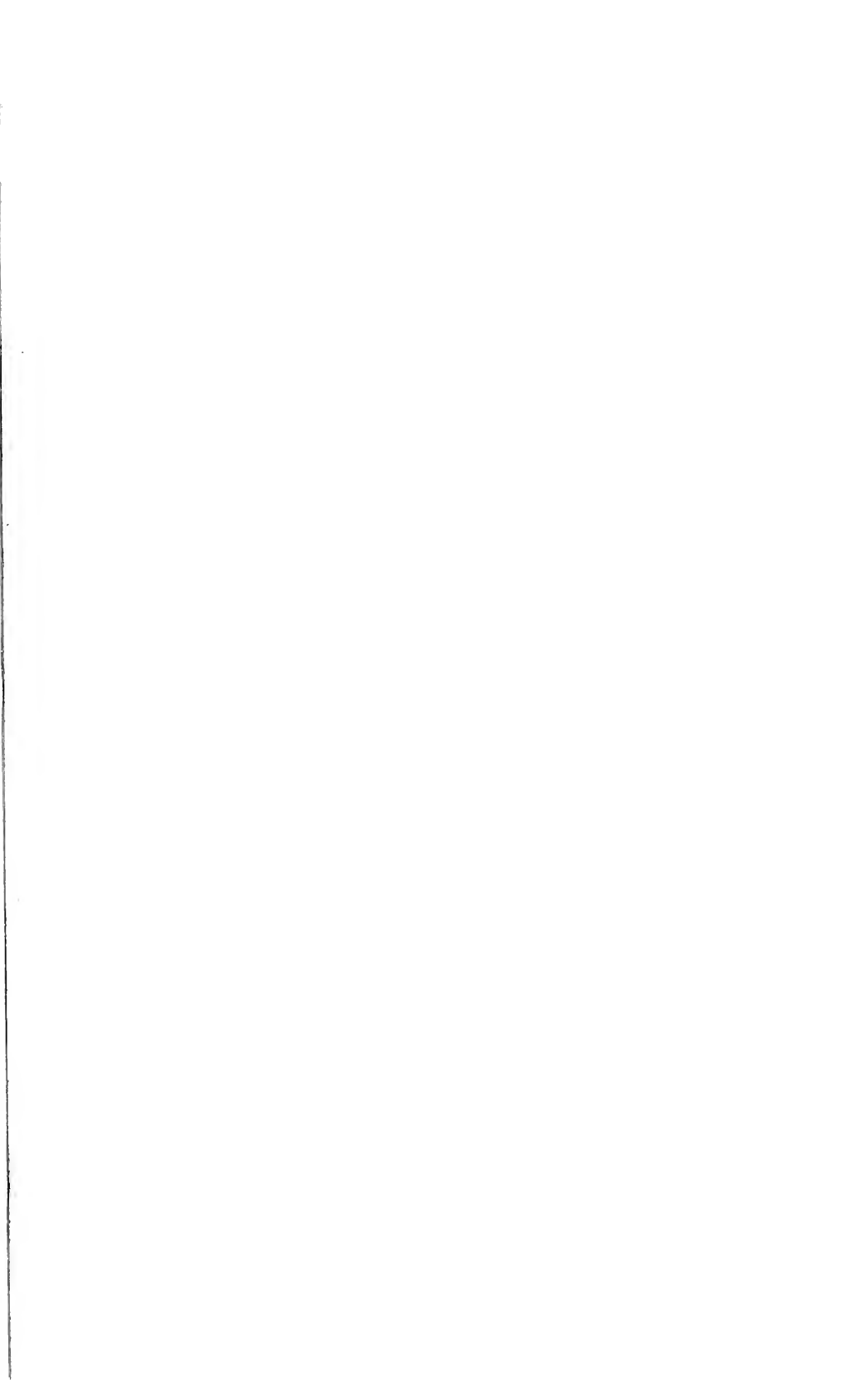
"It is a dark, dark day for the Northern people," I said to my St. Louis physician, a Southern man and secessionist, who had come to visit one of my family on the day the awful news came of Lincoln's assassination. "It is a far darker day for the people of the South," he answered; and his bated breath and pallid face showed how deeply he felt. "What will follow?" "God only knows." Thus men queried and answered. Those were days of terror. We seemed to be living upon the thin crust of a political volcano; the very earth appeared to tremble beneath us.

How far-reaching was that infamous plot of assassination perhaps will never be known. It was conceived with diabolical ingenuity. Had it succeeded in slaying both President and Vice-President, and Grant, the head of the army, and Seward, the Secretary of State, Congress being then adjourned, and the House of Representatives dissolved and without a Speaker, as the law then stood, there would have been no legal head to the government, and apparently no one with authority to call the people to an election. What would have followed? What action would foreign nations have taken? What would have been the policy of the large and influential minority which opposed the war? Would the smouldering fires of the Rebellion have broken forth again? It is vain to speculate, except as speculation shows how fearfully near the edge of an immeasurable calamity the Republic was brought by a plot which must have had wiser heads to plan it than the wretched tools appointed for its execution.

Well may all loyal hearts pray, and always pray, "God save the Republic! God save the President!"

It would be unmeet to omit on this occasion a reference to the perils that brooded over the nation, generated in the unfriendly atmosphere of Europe. It was delicate diplomacy and most tactful management that saved us from foreign complications. And to-day, while the dirge that a mourning empire has raised above the great and good Queen Victoria is still echoing upon sea and shore, it is most meet to speak with grateful heart of her whose wise and friendly policy, fostered by her noble consort, held back the rising wave of hostility that threatened to sweep over us from Great Britain. America owes to Queen Victoria a debt that in this hour we are glad to acknowledge. [Applause.] And when the news of Lincoln's death was flashed under ocean, the awful calamity awakened a sympathy which, in Britain's hour of sorrow, has been rendered back a hundredfold. The wings of a world-wide peace were spread above our martyred leader's tomb, and thus it may be said of him, that, like the Hebrew Hercules, "the dead that he slew at his death were more than they that he slew in his life."

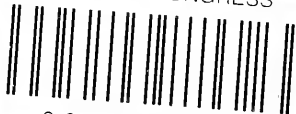
Some men's names are brightest in their contemporary era. Others shine and pale, and renew their lustre, and grow dim, as the clouds of passing fancies or historic fads hide or uncover them. Some pass into the outer and utter darkness of historic forgetfulness. And some there are which shine on steadfast and eternal, brightening ever as the ages go by. Such are the names of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. On the imperishable chart of American constellations, where shine the names of the great and good, these two stars of glory shall burn most bright among the brightest. Where a grateful country shall set aloft the icons of our national worthies, posterity shall write beneath the statues of these two men the words: "Pater Patriæ! Salvator Patriæ!" —This was the Father of his Country; This his Country's Savior!



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